Chapter – 3

Advent of the British
In the previous chapter, some of the highlights of the traditional political structure have already been explored. Having thus seen that traditional political structure centred round the institution of Chieftainship, in this chapter we will concentrate on the coming of the British in Mizoram as the emergence of new mobilizing forces on the political front and the consequent subjugation of the Lushai country. In the traditional setting, the absence of central figure except the village tribal Chief reduced each village or cluster of villages into a semi-independent community, maintaining its own internal and external affairs without external encroachment, at least to a large extent. The lack of cultural contact with the outgroup to give rise to structural and ideological modifications left the institution of Chieftainship and the authority intact when the British came in the late 19th century. Due to the inaccessibility of the land the Mizos had been relatively free from outside invasion except the neighbouring Chins whose invasions they were able to repulse. The present chapter will concentrate on how raids conducted by the Mizos in order to secure social prestige and social rewards resulted in the colonization of their country by the British.

The coming of the British in India dates back to 31st December, 1600 when a Charter was granted by Queen Elizabeth to those interested in such a venture under the title of ‘The Governor and the Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies’. The immediate aim of the Company was the acquisition of the spices and pepper of the Eastern Archipelago. The English beginnings in India were not very promising on account of Portuguese rivalry. British expansion in India occurred during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. However, the British settlement in India slowly expanded and the Battle of Plassey (1757) gave the English certain immediate advantages military and commercial and created a field for the establishment of their political influence. After the Battle of Buxar in 1764, the commercial character of the English became predominantly political as most of the native Indian
rulers were weak in character. By playing off one native ruler against the other, the British gradually acquired control over all the territories in mainland India.\(^1\) The remnant of the authority of the Mughal emperors in India was of course eventually done away with and the British succeeded them as paramount power. Although the Nawab of Bengal remained in name on the throne he was under the control and supervision of the British resident. In 1765 the company acquired the Dewani of Bengal and its power reached the borders of Sikkim, Bhutan, Cooch Behar, Assam and Arrakan, besides the Garo and Khasi\(^2\). At the time of the British contact, the Brahmaputra valley was inhabited by different communities like the Bodos, the Koches the Chutias, the Moamarias were under the Ahom rule. The hills surrounding the Brahmaputra valley and also the hills adjoining the Surma valley in Bengal were inhabited by several indigenous hill communities\(^3\). The Bhutias, the Akas, Duflas, the hill Miris and the Abors inhabited the foothills of Himalayas, north of the river Brahmaputra river surrounding Sadiya were occupied by the Khamptis, the Mishmis and the Singphos. On the eastern side bordering Burma are the Naga hill peopled by different Naga communities. On the west of the Naga hill are the Mikir and the North Cachar hills populated by the Karbis, Dimasa, the Hmars and other hill communities. The southern hill range adjoining the Naga Hills were occupied by the Tangkhul Nagas and the Kukis. The Hills to the south of Goalpara and north of the Surma valley were inhabited by the Garos, and the Khasi Pnars. South of the Cachar plains are the Hill Tipperah and the Lushai hills where communities like Tripuris, the Lushai, the Pawihs, the Lakhers etc lived.

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Initially the British had no knowledge of the different hill communities inhabited the region. It was only in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when the company sent David Scott, the Magistrate of Rangpur, to investigate the causes for tribal revolt against the Zamindars (landlords) of Goalpara that the British came in touch with the hill tribes. At about this period, taking advantage of the political contradictions and anarchy prevailing in the region the Burmese ruler invaded the Ahom kingdom and also took control of the Manipuri and Cachari kingdoms. The British governor warned the British against intervention on behalf of the Ahoms. Realizing the vulnerability of the eastern frontier of Bengal, the British gave up their policy of non-interference and decided to take on the Burmese troops. In the war they had decided to wage, the British needed the support of all native kings and tribal chiefs within the region. David Scott who by then had become the Agent to the Governor General for the North east frontier of Bengal, gave a public proclamation to all the inhabitants of the region requesting them to join against the Burmese invaders. The proclamation stated that the British were not forced to Assam for thirst of conquest, but were forced into war for self defence. The company assured that after defeating the common foe, it would re-established the government suited to the needs and interest of the native people of the region. Once the immediate threat of Burmese invasion disappeared, the British made efforts to bring some kind of administration and political orders in the Ahom territory, affected by palace intrigues and several revolts. Having by then emerge as the de facto rulers in the valley, the British were no more willing to withdraw from the region. Apart from their strategic considerations to protect the frontiers of Bengal, the British who by then had become aware of the economic potentialities of the region, chose to become a key player in Assam.

The minutes of Cornwallis (3rd October 1792) show that the Company’s first intervention in Assam was in 1792, at the request of the king of Assam and ‘for the commercial advantages that Bengal may obtain’ by a friendly and open intercourse with that country. Among the hill tribes of Assam, the Khasis and Jaintias first became under the colonial rule. Their resistance and the subsequent pacification process only completed subordination of the thirty odd Chiefships and the essential apparatus of native administration was retained intact. In 1869, the British took over the administration of Garo Hills, and recognised the Nokmas and Chiefs with their traditional functions.

After 1857, company rule came to an end with the British crown decided to take direct administration of India. The colonizers desire to increase revenue from their new possession from the plains led the British to introduce certain changes in the valley regions. Efforts were made to bring more and more land in the Brahmaputra valley under cultivation by initiating new forest and wastelands policy. The British planters were allowed to expand tea gardens up to the foothills. The British encourage immigration of people from other parts to work for them in administration, trade agriculture and plantations in the region. The British officials undertook surveys both in the plains and the hills with the idea of taking direct control over territories with minerals and forest resource. Such colonial project has an indirect effect on the hill people as well. To facilitate movements of their men, the British constructed road through the hills to connect the valleys of the region with Bengal. On occasion in the name of

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7 Bengal Judicial Proceedings, June 1870, No 27, Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1870-71, CB-14, Political Branch, MSA
uniformity, the British began demanding tributes from the hill Chiefs and imposed house tax and other taxes on some of the indigenous tribes. The traditional rights of the posa that some of the hill tribes traditionally enjoyed was either denied or was considerably restricted. In place of the barter system, monetary transactions were introduced. The hill communities, used to living autonomous lives, found it difficult to assimilate and accept the new changes. The presence of large number of outsiders – the whites and also people from the plains in their midst or in their vicinity caused fear and tension among the hill people. The colonial initiative like the enactment of new forest and wasteland policies, the replace of posa by payment in cash, abolition of slavery, the expansion of tea plantation and agricultural activities in the hill areas, the control over duars and markets adversely affected the traditional sources of livelihood of the indigenous hill tribes. Some tribe felt increasing burden on taxes and the growing administrative control over their traditional institutions and practices unbearable. Initially, when the British were not sure of their own strength, they made treaties with the native rulers and Chiefs treating them as equals. But once the colonial power had consolidated its authority, the old treaties that were based on mutual recognition and reciprocity were replaced by new treaties with more clauses and stringent condition. Such colonial interventions and policies that impinge upon the traditional rights of the indigenous people enraged the hill tribes to attack the British subjects and interest.

Posa – Ransom paid by the plain people to the hill tribes.

In 1866, a forward policy was inaugurated resulting in the establishment of the Naga hills district with a headquarters at Chumukedima (Samaguting).\(^{10}\) The Lushai Hills was one of the last major areas in India to be annexed by the British. The military defeat of Burma and the signing of the treaty of Yandabo in 1826 led to the renunciation of Burma’s claims on the territories of Assam, Manipur and their neighbourhood as well as the cession of Tenasserim and Arakan to the British. According to the British interpretation, the Assam hills west of the Patkoi range of mountains came under British possession by virtue of the treaty.\(^{11}\) In 1852, lower Burma was annexed. In 1862 the ceded territories of Burma were constituted into a chief Commissioner’s province. On 1\(^{st}\) January 1886, upper Burma was annexed to it.

Thus by the middle of the 19\(^{th}\) century, the British came to contact with almost all the hill tribes inhabiting the regions. However, for quite some time, the colonial administration was not clear as to what kind of policy had to be adopted to deal with the hill tribes. Initially, the policy makers at the higher echelons of British administration instructed their officers not to interfere in the internal affairs of the hill communities. But at the ground level the tribal conflicts at times resulted in so much violence and bloodshed that the officers in the field were forced to intervene in different inter or intra tribal squabbles. Such engagement resulted in direct confrontations between the British subjects and the native tribes, much against the wishes of the colonial authorities. In addition to such unintended encounters, the colonial policies of the British also played parts in intensifying conflicts between the British and the hill communities in the region.


From the very early period the Lushai Hills was subject to inroads from the plains of Cachar\textsuperscript{12}. It had been a wild country of virgin forests and unfriendly hills. It was inhabited by tribes loosely called \textit{Kukis}, \textit{Lusei} and \textit{Pawi}. The adjacent territory was Hill Tipperah (Tripura), ruled by a nother independent Rajah to whom these tribes owed their allegiance\textsuperscript{13}. Since what was produced in the Hills were not sufficient to meet all their material requirements, the hill tribes had to find outlets in the plains either for trade or for cultivable lands. The hill tribes used to go down to 	extit{Hats}, the village markets situated near the \textit{duars}, the mountain passages to sell their forest and mineral products and exchanged required goods with the cultivators and traders of the plains. Such trading business and activities were necessary for the hill communities and were very profitable for the traders in the plains\textsuperscript{14}. The hill people were often cheated and exploited by the traders and landlords in the Plains. As a retaliation, the hill tribes used to plunder the villages and take away men and materials from the plains. Some tribes such as the Mizo and the Khamptis used to engaged the persons kidnapped from the plains as slaves and using them for agricultural and other productive activities\textsuperscript{15}. The slave trade was prevalent among certain hill tribes. Unless ransomed they would sell the kidnapped person to merchants from neighbouring districts. The people of the plain in some areas used to pay \textit{‘Posa’}, a kind of ransom or blackmail, to the hill tribes every year, in the form of foodstuff, cloths or ornaments, slaves and other requirements. While the hill tribes considered posa as their rights, the people of the plains looked at it as an

\textsuperscript{12} Alexander Mackenzie, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 287.


\textsuperscript{14} H.K Barpujari, \textit{op.cit.}, pp 13,14.

inescapable obligation. Nevertheless, there used to be disputes between hill tribes and the people in the plains over the issue of posa.16

3.1 The British And The Mizos

As far as we can ascertain, the Mizos began to make their entry to the present Mizoram around the middle of the 17th century.17 Among the social scientists, it is opined that migration 'as the physical transition of an individual or a group from one society to another'. This transition usually involves abandoning one social settings and entering another usually involves abandoning and entering another different one.18 As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Mizos were a tribe who fought with each other and the inferior one tend to move further in search of new land to earn their living. Lallula was the first chief of the Lushais known by outsiders. He led the Mizos while migrating from Burma to the Western Hills. They belonged to Sailo clan.19

The Sailos, by virtue of their paramountcy in war and skills in administration, established their domination throughout Mizoram except Pawi – Lakher region, driving out the weaker and smaller sub-groups. It was only when the Sailos made their westward move that they realized that the land was already occupied and populated by petty Chiefs of different clans whose Chiefdoms were in danger of being vanquished. After this, the pattern of settlement became more stable and population increase and the increased at a

18 Quoted in Amal Datta, Human Migration – a Social phenomenon, Mittal publication, Guwahati/Delhi, 2003, p 19.
faster rate. The general population increase and the increased numbers of Sailo male children, each of them a potential Chief, forced the Sailos to expand their domination. Thus, they began to make raids on the neighbouring tribes as well as petty chiefs in and around Mizoram. This gradually and ultimately brought inroads into the plains of Cachar and Chittagong Hill Tracts and Manipur. The villages set up by these run-away tribes in Cachar and Sylhet were the main targets of attacks by the Lushai. At this time, the general condition of the hills was best described by Sir Robert Reid, Governor of Assam during 1937 – 42 by saying that “nothing does more to establish a chief and bring followers and influence than success in raids upon weaker chiefs, upon the villages and outposts and tea gardens”. However, migration is considerably influenced by factors such as the closeness of cultural contracts, cultural diversity etc.

A survey party under Captain Hedgkins and Lt. Sandis surveyed some parts of the Lushai Hills and went up to Serkawr village by the side of the Kolodyne river. However, the first visit of an English official to the hills was made apparently in 1800 by Mr Renvell, the Chief Engineer of Bengal, who published the earliest account of the people of that area. After this, no further attempt was made to explore the hills. Only after forty years there was an attempt to penetrate into the hills and that too was only a retaliatory expedition.

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20 R. Vanlawma, Ka Ram leh Kei (My country and I), Aizawl, Zoram Printing Press, 1972, p. 19.
21 Robert Reid, The Lushai Hills: culled from the History of the Frontier Areas Bordering Assam from 1883 – 1941, FKLM, Calcutta, 1929, p. 3.
22 C. Nunthara, op. cit., p. 51.
23 Amal Datta, op. cit., p. 27.
24 Animesh Ray, op. cit., p. 3.
Though the British knew that the hills were occupied by the Lushais, they did not have any proper contact with them until the Mizos conducted regular raids in the Cachar Hills. In this area, the British expanded their territory by making tea gardens. British people were deeply involved in the tea industry as managers and owners. When they first encountered them the Mizos thought they were merely freaks of nature and were later surprised to find that they were so numerous. The Mizos considered this area to be their country and did not like the interference of the Britishers within their country. Besides, hunting was very important for them as it affected their life after death. Therefore, expansion of tea garden could not go unnoticed for the Mizos as it resulted in clearing of jungles which used to serve them as their hunting ground especially to secure an elephant tusk.

There are three routes to the Lushai country from Assam viz., the Western one up the Dhaleswari to Changsil Bazar, the middle one up to Sonai Bazar near Kalkham Punji, and the third up the Barak to Tipaimukh. The Mizos were a fierce tribes and opposed to the coming of the Britishers and other tribes into the Lushai Hills. They counteracted with them several times. The Lushai chiefs were the main opponents to the Britishers. The British authority could not easily established its supremacy over the Lushai Hills as the Mizos got accustomed to the use of firearms since the first Burmese war. Besides, the Mizo chiefs also entertained a large number of Burmese soldiers to train the fighters or warriors. The Mizo not only attacked the Britishers but also raided

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26 J. Meirion Llyod, History of the Church in Mizoram (Harvest in the Hills), Synod Publication Board, Aizawl, Mizoram, Gospel Centenary Series No. 1, p. 9

27 Letter to the personal Assistant to the Chief Commissioner of Cachar, No 2,940, Dated Silchar, the 17th December, 1888, 1890, Political and Judicial –A, Foreign Progs, Dec, Nos 1-19, p. 8. ASR.

28 Judicial Proceedings of Bengal, February 27, 1850, No 36, Listers Report, CB -14,Political Branch, p. 19. MSA.
the villages which were set up by the run-away tribes in Cachar and Sylhet. These tribes were the main targets of attacks by the Lushais. The Mizo raids in the neighbouring territories were recorded in the British administration in these areas\textsuperscript{29}.

3.1.1 First Stage – Raids:

The first phase of the Anglo–Mizo relations was marked by hostility, and sporadic incidents of raids of varying intensity were quite common. The first Mizo penetration of the border areas dates back to 1777, when one of the tribal chiefs of Chittagong, a district which was ceded to the British under Clive by Mir Qasim in 1760 applied to the British for protection against the incursion of the ‘Kukis’ as they were then called\textsuperscript{30}. HNC Stevenson also stated the Chin started raiding in the Chittagong Hills late in the eighteen century\textsuperscript{31}. Another record says the first encounter of the Mizos with the British appears to have been in 1824. In the month of September of that year, some enterprising traders from the plains, who had penetrated into the hills along the Dhaleswari river to collect bamboos and timber, were ambushed and killed by the Mizos\textsuperscript{32}.

The first raid on the Assam border was recorded in 1826\textsuperscript{33}. One important outcome was the possession of the Cachar by the British. It was rendered

\textsuperscript{29} Most of the raids are described by A. Mackenzie in History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of North East Frontier of Bengal, Home Department, Calcutta, 1844.

\textsuperscript{30} A.S Reid, Chin Lushai Land, Rpt, FKLM, Calcutta, 1976 on behalf of TRI, Aizawl, p.7.

\textsuperscript{31} HNC Stevenson, Appended to Pierre Bessaignat, Tribesmen of Chittagong Hill Tracts, Publications No 1 Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca, 1958, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{32} LB Thanga, op.cit., p. 109.

necessary on account of the raid which was committed by the Mizos. Here, Paite Chief Lalrihua raided Sylhet. The records did not contain proper information why the raid was conducted. But it shows that it was brutal and many people lost their lives that the British called it 'Massacre in the plain Sylhet'. The Paite ruled in Tripura in Jampui area. The Paites were nominally under the political sovereignty of Raja of Tripura but for all practical purpose they were independent. It is further mentioned that Manipuri Raja died and there was a fratricidal war between his sons. British supported Tribowanjit and Ram Singh invited Lalrihua to help him which he refused. Fuming with anger he killed Lalrihua. Lalrihua's son Lalsutthlaha swore to take revenge for his father. Suhas Chatterjee mentioned that Lalrihua and the two Manipuri Princes were enemies since they demanded money and other ransom from him in their political venture which he declined. The angry Manipuri princes tortured Lalrihua to death. His son Lalsutthlaha vowed to take revenge upon the Manipuris who were responsible for the death and humiliation of his father.

Therefore, as he swore, on 16th April, 1844, with more than 200 men, Lalsutthlaha raided Kachubari where he killed many people. It was a daring raid for it killed many people. Suhas Chatterjee mentioned that the cry of the victims did rent the night sky of the spring season. He further mentioned that the principal cause of the raid was the burial of Lalrihua as the tribes observed a horrible funeral programme where the body of the death chief was placed on the courtyard of the chief’s house on a raised platform, the body was dried with smokes, food and drinks were offered to the death man and finally a large number of human heads were placed in the grave of the Chief who were to become the slaves of the Chiefs in the underworld called ‘mitthi khua’.

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death)\(^{36}\). For this incident the British Government sent Captain Blackwood and arrested Lalsutthlaha and sentence him to lifetime imprisonment according to Regulation VIII Of 1829. The Sylhet Light Infantry under the command of Captain Blackwood was despatched inside the Lushai Hills. Lalsutthlaha was then captured. But the raids continued till 1880's. In 1847, the Lushai raided the British territory and killed more than one hundred fifty people. The following year, the Lushais attacked a Kuki village within ten miles south of Silchar and killed twenty-nine people and took away forty captives\(^{37}\).

On the Burma side, from 1800 to 1872 the records bemoan the raids of the Kumis, Shendus, Kukis and other tribes, who swooped down from their fastness on the east to murder, pillage and burn\(^{38}\). It was, however, only in 1847 that the serious attention of Government was first drawn to the Mizos. Col. McCulloch the political Agent in Manipur, drew attention to the increasing power of the Mizos, whose conflicts with other tribes living in Manipur had attracted his attention. Col. McCulloch suggested that as the Mizos were known to belong to Hill Tiperrah, they should be restrained through the Rajah from raiding the plains. The Rajah of Tripura denied all Knowledge of the raids and denied that they were his subjects.

Subsequently, Mizos made many raids on the neighbouring districts. Thus, there were raids in 1840, 1845, 1847 and 1849. Not until 1844 did the British try to enter the hills. In 1840-44 Mizos once again appeared on the British border on Chattachurra range, Manipur border and Sylhet, killing a number of persons and running away with many prisoners. In retaliation, the

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 533

\(^{37}\) Judicial Proceedings of Bengal, May 27, 1844, No 103, Officiating Magistrate, Mr Sealy, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal in the Judicial department & A. Mackenzie, op.cit., pp. 288-290. MSA.

\(^{38}\) S. Carry and HN Tuck, op.cit., p. 12

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first small expedition commanded by Captain Balckwood\textsuperscript{39} was sent in December 1844.\textsuperscript{40} But raids continued till late 1880's.

The next major attack on the British territory was made in November 1849 when a party of woodcutters was massacred and a village of Tripura and another in Sylhet valley (West of Chattachura range and in the Cachar plains) was plundered. To counter and to stop this raids the British sent a punitive expedition against the Mizos under the Sylhet Light infantry commanded by Colonel Lister in June 1850\textsuperscript{41}. The expedition was quite effective and as result peace was maintained for almost ten years. The raid was conducted by Sentlang Chief Ngura, son of Lallianvunga. The raid cost number of lives and enslave 400 people. After this raid the British Government despatched a punitive expedition inside the Lushai Hills in order to subdue the Lushai Chiefs and the people as well. Colonel Lister arrived Sentlang village of Chief Ngura. This village was burnt by Lister’s troops on January 16, 1850\textsuperscript{42}. Taking it by surprise, soon he retreated with his troops to the plains, as a force of about five to seven thousand armed Lushais were preparing stockades and were trying to cut off his communication\textsuperscript{43}.

Lister set forth his recommendation for the future action to the Government and said thus:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 21.
\item \textsuperscript{40} AS Reid, op.cit., p. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{41} R.G Woodthorpe, \textit{The Lushai Expedition 1871-72}, Rpt, Krishan Kumar on behalf of Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1980, p. 15
\item \textsuperscript{42} A.Mackenzie, op.cit., p. 292.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Animesh Ray, op.cit., p. 4.
\end{itemize}
'The Lushais are a very powerful tribe under the Government of Six Sirdars, of whom one is the acknowledged chief. They all have their separate cantonments with the number of dependent villages attached. In these cantonments the fighting men reside: In the dependent villages are located their ryots, who are merely used as coolies, and for tilling the soil. They consist, in many instances, of the captives they have brought in their probably taken as mere children and gradually reconciled to their captivity.'

Colonel Lister was further asked to enter into negotiations with the leading Lushai Chiefs in order to establish friendly relations with them. But the proposals were politely turned down. However, up to the beginning of 1862, Sylhet and Cachar were tolerably free from disturbances.

In October 1850 five Mizo Chiefs sent deputies into the Cachar plains with friendly overtures to the Superintendent. On this occasion one of the Chief named Suakpuilala of Kanghmun village in 1862 was contacted, and his friendship was strengthened by an annual subsidy of Rs 500 and trade tax from the traders who were running shops under his jurisdiction. The agreement was made because Suakpuilala was regarded to be the most powerful chief among the Mizos and was further considered to have powers and authority over the Chiefs. This proved to be a totally wrong British perception, for Suakpuilala controlled only a few areas in the North hills, while other chiefs did not recognized him as a representative of the whole tribe. The tax paid by the traders to Suakpuilala was called ‘Sidak’ and was paid annually by the traders.

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44 For details, see Lister’s Report to the Secretary, Government of Bengal, Judicial proceedings, February 27, 1850, No 36 and L.B Thanga, Ibid., p. 111.

45 L.B.Thanga, op.cit., p. 113.

46 Ibid., p. 114.
Suakpuilala reckoned the terms of agreement to include restrain on the part of the British and not to expand the then territorial boundary of the British towards Mizoram and readily accepted. Cachar traders opened up stored at Changsil and trade relations improved within a very short time. However, the British did expand their tea gardens towards Mizoram. This was considered by Suakpuilala as breaking the terms of agreement and an encroachment on the Mizoland. This ultimately brought fresh inroads into the British territories, and raiding on tea gardens and indigenous tribes of the British territories as a form of revenge against the British for breach of agreement and encroachment on Mizoland.

For some time there was a peace between them and the British thought that the Chiefs should be left undisturbed but to their surprise In 1860, Sailo Chief Rothangpuia and his followers raided Chagulney area and burnt down 15 villages. They returned with a lot of booty. The following year, the British sent an expedition under Captain Rabon against Rothangpuia. He therefore surrendered and they did not arrest him. This incident was called the 'great Kuki Invasion of 1860'.

At this time chief Suakpuilala came into prominence. He had so long been having an amicable relationship with the British. But now he also went into warpath. On January 22, 1862, a cluster of villages called Adampore in Cachar were raided and a large number of inhabitants massacred and carried off. The attack on Adampore was led by four Chiefs, namely Murchilal (Ngursailova), Sukpilal (Suakpuilala) Rungbhum (Runvunga) and Lal Hoolien (Lalhuliana). An expedition was therefore sent from Cachar into the Lushai Hills to punish the offending Chiefs. The Government decided to open negotiations and to return the captives. Accordingly, Captain Stewart, the then

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47 C.Nunthara, op.cit, p.52.

48 Animesh Ray, op.cit., p. 5.
Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, negotiated with the Chiefs and came to terms that they would keep peace in the British frontiers and would give certain articles to the British Government would pay Rs 50/- a month of the Chiefs, subject only to an annual Nuzzar to Government. Later it was revealed that Ngursailova had married Vanhnuaithangi, sister of S uakpuilala and the Adampore raid was in commemoration of that occasion.

However, after such agreement was arrived at, the Mizo chiefs did not stop raiding the British territory in the neighbouring areas. The British Government then decided to post an officer in the Lushai Hills for the purpose of entering into agreements with the Mizo Chiefs to refer all disputes between them and the frontier village to him for arbitration. This step was to bring some sort of supervisory control over the Lushai Chiefs.

Despite the British effort to maintain peace in the Lushai Hills, more and more raids were reported from within and outside the frontier. This is clear from the reports made by the Magistrate of Sylhet, which says:

'The Lushais are getting bolder every year and extending their ravages further into the plains. Unless their independence as a powerful tribe is quickly broken, the frontier will never be free from their attacks... That they acknowledge no allegiance to Tiperrah Rajah is certain'.


50 L.B Thanga, op.cit., p. 113.
As a precautionary measure, he further says that,

‘As a temporary measure, I venture to suggest the arming with muskets of a few hundred Kukis under an European Officer and all condemned muskets belonging to the Sylhet Light Infantry should be handed over to the Superintendent of Cachar for Distribution among the frontier villages'.

Loll Khan Chakma Chief was raided and imprisoned his two sons and took two rifles, in 1864 April Shendu tribe some Bengali woodcutter and killed and imprisoned them. Manipur was raided in 1868 by Pawibawia and Vanhnuailiana raiding Naga police station resulting in the killing of one subedar and took his head.

In 1868 Suakpuilala and Vanpuilala raided Silchar Adampore killing few and the reason of this raid was to threaten the plain people as they think that the plain people had penetrated too deep into their country. In 1869, continuous raids took place. In the month of January, Lalruma, son of Lalphunga raided Nawarbund. In January 14, Suakpuilala and Dothiauva raided Nawarbund and Monierkhal. British records mentioned that,

‘On Jan 29, the Looshais attacked Nawarbund, a garden in Cachar belonging to this company resulting in the destruction of cattle, buildings, factory. As Nawarbund and other gardens which is nearer to the frontier, there is no precautionary measures against the attack of the wild tribes. Nine coolies still missing who it is believed to be captured by the Looshais will probably retained

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51 L.B Thanga, op.cit., p. 112.
in slavery, which is stated to be in prevailing custom of this wild tribes.\footnote{From R. Blechynden, Esq, Secretary to the East India Tea company, Limited, to the Hon’ble A. Eden, Secretary to the Government of Bengal – dated Calcutta, the 28th April, 1869, Judicial Department, May, 1869, General Branch, p. 54. SAWB}

And in the Southern part of the Lushai Hills, Haulawng Chief Tlutpawrha and Vansanga raided Kaladyne area where they killed a number of natives.

3.1.2 Alexandrapur:

The year 1870-71 was a new chapter in the history of Mizoram. During January and February 1871 a series of raids were made along the border of the Cachar and the Chittagong Tracts respectively, the most serious being the killing of a British citizen at the raid committed at Alexandrapur under a Chief named Bengkhuai of Kawlri village. In this raid, twenty-five persons were killed and thirty-seven persons were taken as captives. On the same day, the Chief Bengkhuai attacked a tea garden at Alexandrapur in Cachar. The people at Alexandrapur were taken completely by surprise. Mr. Sellar, the proprietor of the tea garden could manage his escape while his neighbouring planter, Mr Winchester was brutally killed by a gunshot and his little daughter, Mary Winchester, was carried off. On the following day, the tea garden at Katlicherra was again attacked.\footnote{A. Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 67. Judicial proceedings of Bengal, January 1872, No 141 and see also Judicial proceedings of Bengal, February 1872, No 106, p. 35. NAI.}

Those who had made the raids on Alexandrapur were braves from the village of a prominent Chief called Bengkhuai and Sangvunga, both of them Rolura’s son who ruled over the villages of Serc hhip, Sailam, Kawlri and
Thenzawl. Bengkhuaia had the reputation of being a good and popular chief and later a stone was erected to his memory in Thenzawl where he died. Since they are the biggest contributors, they carried the name, but other Chiefs like Seipuia and Lalburha from the south as well as Savunga were also fighting on their side.

The feelings roused by Mary Winchester’s kidnapping compelled the government to make strenuous effort to release the little girl. A large scale attack involving three columns of soldiers was mounted by the army. The column which was to enter from the Burma side failed to get through. The other two, however, approaching from north and south, reached their objectives despite considerable opposition from the Mizos. The column from the south was led by Colonel Thomas Lewin, a very able officer with a gift for getting on with the Mizos. Zairema notes that this event ‘was a good excuse for subjugating the wild Mizos, occupying their country in 1885 and disarming them’⁵⁴. A few years of peace prevailed after the expedition of 1871-72 and trade flourished⁵⁵. The incident at Alexandrapur made it known to the world that there were ‘savages’ living in the remote corner of India who the British called were ‘headhunters’. On the same day, they also raided Ainerkhal village in Hailakandi area and Cachar Punjee. They killed 25 people and captivated 37 people and burnt the village. They went further to Katlicherra but the local people had already heard of the raid and the British had time to defend this area and thus not much casualties was inflicted here. When the Mizos entered their village, they fought back fiercely and wounded two Mizos. The Mizos, therefore returned to back to the Lushai Hills.


They were emboldened by their success the Mizos penetrated as far as Nugdigram and even attacked British protected areas in Manipur and Tipperah. Col E.B Elly mentioned that it was the Howlongs (Southern Sailo) and the Syloos (Sailo) who committed raids in South Cachar, and the raids in Eastern Cachar were traced to the sons of Vanolel (Vanhuailiana), assisted probably by the people of Vonpilal (Vanpuilala) and Poiboi (Pawibawia). The raids in Sylhet and Tipperah were believed to have been recognized. This raids thus afforded the Mizo chiefs with one white girl and 13 guns. The incident at Alexandrapur is one of the most significant event as it occasioned a new chapter in the history of the Mizo’s.

Further, in January 26, Lalburha raided Monierkhal and Durnikhhal and all the people already fled the village. When the Mizo shot them, they fought back and the Mizos could not penetrated further therefore retreated. The same day another raid took place at Nugdigram killing 11 and enslaving 3 people. On that same day, Thanhranga and his group ambushed 4th Native Infantry.

Maximum number of raids was witnessed between 26th -28th, January, 1871. In February 1871, Lalburha raided Jhalnacherra and killed 7 people, wounded 3. In 1871, February 27, Suakpuilala’s sister Vanhnuaithangi, Kalkhama and Tlutpawrha raided Alinagar but had to retreat since the Britishers were ready to fight against them. Bengkhuaiia and Sangvunga raided Magh and killed 11 people and took 35 people as slaves. In 1886, Lai raided the Chakmas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts killing two and maimed two persons. In 1888, December 13 Pakuma Rani’s village was raided by Kalkhama killing 21 people.

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57 Suhas Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 230.
took 13 heads and enslaving 15 men. In 1889, Lianphunga raided many villages in the Chittagong Hill Tracts killed many people, enslaving more than 200. In 1892 Lalburha invade Burruncherra tea garden killing 45 persons enslaving 13 people. The outcome of the treaty was that Chief Lalburha returned the captured guns and was forced to abide by all laws enforced by the British even to the extent of reinstiting several of the captives who were under the custody of the other chiefs. In return the British also recruited a number of Mizo young men either to serve under their service or to work in the tea gardens. As a result, for commercial purpose three bazaars – Changsil, Tipaimukh and Sonai bazaar were established in the North hills. Thus peace was maintained for nearly twenty years. From this year onwards there were constant ‘friendly’ relations and ‘intercourse’ with the plains. At the same time some advance money were given to obviate the suffering caused by the lost of their crops during the expeditions 58.

This is last recorded raid we have in Mizo history. This concludes the history of Lushai outrage and hostility on the Assam frontier up to 1871. During this period, villages on the Chittagong frontier had been frequently devastated by the people of the Hills.

On the other hand, there were many reasons on the part of the Mizos to attack and plunder the British occupied villages and the tea gardens at the border areas. The chief reason was due to their economic backwardness and love of headhunting – the aims of which were to display their victory over the enemy and bravery in the community. Headhunting was regarded as the greatest feat, achievement and source of honour in Mizo society. It was equally important for the departed soul of the chief. The greatness of the chief depended

largely on the number of heads brought home. ‘Headhunting’ was indeed, one of their favourite past time. Heads of their enemies killed were brought home as war trophies and defenceless tea garden labourer’s heads provided good trophies. Not only heads but also slaves were important for honour, status and economic power. Slaves were exchange for firearms in the border areas. It is to be noted that, the power and strength of the Chief was generally measured by the number of slaves he had kept in his house or village. The Chief was well off for the slaves usually did all the arduous work of the Chief and his families. During the pre-colonial period, fighting with their neighbouring villages was a part of their life. They celebrated the braves and occupied a prominent place in their society. It was said that all men was supposed to fight in war when needed. The whole village was a military unit where the chief was their leader. They had to bring the head of their victim to prove their victory. And the head was then hanged at the top of a pole where everyone could see, usually at the entrance of their village which everyone crosses on the way to their jhum.

Besides this, Mizos often had clan feud for the best land for cultivation and for dwelling or living. It was also sometimes caused by opposed interest of two or more Chiefs on matters like marriage which sometimes involved all members of the ethnic group or clans. Such quarrel often led to the difficulty of cultivating their jhum. Due to this reason, in the next agricultural year there usually was a shortage of food grains or paddy. Faced with such scarcity, parties of Mizos used to go to the border villages. Thus when clan feuds developed a group of Mizos or warriors often clashed with the neighbouring tribes who were under the protection of the British Government.

Another reason for the incessant raids at the border areas was the scarcity of salt in the hills. Salt was a great problem for the hills. Quarrels between Chiefs or individuals households often broke out for the best claim to salt springs. Moreover, when salt springs dried up or salt was not sufficient, some Mizos who needed salt usually made inroads into the neighbouring areas.

Since 1826, most of the North eastern parts were under the British. The British soon established their tea gardens in the neighbouring areas of Cachar. The Mizos claimed the new tea garden in Cachar as their hunting ground. A land from which they had already driven out their enemies, the previous inhabitants, to protect the encroachment of their land by the colonial government, the Mizo Chiefs frequently attack them during the middle of the 19th Century. The Colonial government thus sent the first expedition under Colonel Lister in 1850 in the Northern part of Mizoram. The next expedition was in 1871-72, this expedition put many mizo chiefs under the control of British. However, the hills finally fell under the British in 1890.

We may thus say that in the first place, raid was conducted for expansion of their territory and in order to secure their daily needs as well as a means of protection and revenge which finally brought them into contact with the British.
3.2 Second Stage – Consolidation And Annexation

Among the north eastern hill tribes, Mizos were the last to be conquered by the British. The process of subjugating the tribes may be said to have started after annexation of Mizoram had economic, political financial, strategic interests and cultural aspects. The first British settlers in the Cachar hills were seen in Tripura 1865, Assam tea garden in 1841 Cachar in 1853.

The tradition of warfare of the Sailos and migratory pressure towards northwest continued till nineteenth century. In this State they came in contact with the British. The consolidation of the Britishers into the Lushai Hills may be said to have begun in 1891, more or less, with the annexation of Assam by the British. Thus, the exploration of the Lushai Hills first started from the west side where Chittagong in Bengal had been a British administrative post. During 1824–25 some rudimentary survey of the Lushai Hills was carried out by a survey party under the command of Captain Hedgekins and Lieutenant Sandis. During the first Burmese war the Burmese and the Arakan forces also went inside the Lushai Hills. Records show that raids by Mizo Chiefs were due to the harassment and cheating by traders through the practice of barter for salt. Cutting of forest products and clearing of jungles also created disputes with the British.

Thus, as part of a new policy, negotiations with Lushai Chiefs were attempted by the British Government. In December 20, 1869, Mr Edgar came

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60 J.Shakepeare, op.cit., 1912, p. 3.

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into the Lushai Hills with a view to making negotiation with the Chiefs. By late 1869 and in the beginning of 1870 there was an agreement regarding the boundary between Cachar and the territories of the Lushai Hills. Mr Edgar met Suakpuilala, the only Sanad of the British Government in the Lushai Hills was executed by Edgar and Sookpilal (Suakpuilala). But this agreement did not prevent the raids by the other Lushai Chiefs. Even though the Mizo Chief’s sense of boundary was not fixed. It was in a state of flux and every Chief used to divide his loosely defended area of control among his sons. It was also said that the Mizo Chiefs regarded plunder as lawful and commendable as raids and war made by the Chiefs were part of the retaliation against their enemies since they felt that their enemies disturbed their elephant hunting ground within their boundary. Mackenzie lucidly gives out the picture of the Pre-British time. He writes:

‘Even the chiefs claim no property in the land or in the forests. Each claims the men of his tribes wherever they wander, or in whatever part of the country they may settle for the time to jhoom. Generally speaking the jhoomeas of each clan confine themselves within certain rough limits, but there is no real local jurisdiction vesting in any of the chiefs.’

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65 A.Mackenzie, op.cit., p.332.
3.2.1 The Expedition of 1871 – 1872:

In retaliation of the raid conducted by the Mizos, the British intended to send expeditory forces to Mizoram to punish those chiefs responsible for the Alexandrapore incident and to bring back Mary Winchester, who was being kept by Bengkhuaia, Chief of Sailam, as his daughter. But due to bad weather, the expedition was postponed till December 1871. In this expedition, the British sent two columns. The southern column was headed by General Brownlow. The column consisted of 2\textsuperscript{nd} Gurkhas, 4\textsuperscript{th} Gurkhas, 27\textsuperscript{th} Punjab Light Infantry, one company of sappers and miners, one mountain battery, Chittagong frontier police, consisting of 550 men accompanied by boats and coolies\textsuperscript{66}. The southern Column was also called ‘Right or Chittagong column’.

The advance of the southern column was to direct to the villages of Sangvunga and Bengkhuaia, the two Chiefs responsible in the raids and with whom was Mary Winchester. A few Chiefs offered severe resistance while some Chiefs did not give resistance. The British troops, armed as they were with sophisticated weapons, did not find difficulty in overpowering the southern Chiefs, and the southern chiefs submitted to them. Thus Mary Winchester was taken back. The Bengal Government however, did not agree with the mild punishment given to the southern Mizo Chiefs. Thus, a flying column was sent out to different villages in the south. Along with this column was sent a team of surveyors to map the country. General Brownlow’s troops returned to Chittagong by the end of March 1872, and for sixteen years, the Mizo gave no serious trouble. The main frontier Police Post, after this expedition, was moved from Kassalong to Demagiri (Tlabung) in the present Mizoram.

\textsuperscript{66} C.Nunthara, op.cit., p. 53.
The Northern column (Left or Cachar Column) was headed by General Bourchier, and the troop had equal strength as the southern column. The column received the first resistance on December 25th, 1871 from Lahleia, while the column was celebrating Christmas at Khawlian. But the attack was soon repulsed. On January 25th, 1872, Pawibawia offered strong resistance in which a number of British troops including the General suffered casualties, but Pawibawia was also soon subdued, and the forces proceeded towards Champhai to inflict punishment on Vanhnuailiana. However, Vanhnuailiana had already shifted his village site from Champhai to Chawnchhim, and that he was already dead and the village administration was looked after by his wife as there was no immediate male issue to succeed him. Pawibawia and Vanhnuailiana were the two Chiefs responsible for the attack on Manipur Nagas. The following British records confirmed their involvement:

'... that this day a deputation of three Lushais, sent by Chief Vanolail and Poiboi, who were concerned in the recent raids upon Munnipore Hill territory, appeared before me. About two weeks ago three men, Looshais came to Munnipore, who said that they occupied villages, lying immediately in contact with Munnipore hill and that in consequence of the Khonjai attack on the Looshai camp, as reported in my letter No 10 of 11 April last, they were in such a state of dread, that they could not cultivate their fields and were anxious to come under the government of Munnipore as its subjects. These men belonged to a village under the chief Poiboi, one of the most notorious of the raiders in Munnipore territory of February last. They were told by the Raja, after consulting me on the matter, that the matter, that their allegiance would be accepted by him conditionally upon their proving their sincerity by actively assisting the Munnipories in
case of need. In the meantime, they need not fear being molested, with this assurance they departed'.

The letter further mentioned,

'The three men examined by me today state that they have been sent by the chiefs Vanolail and Poiboi to try and arrange matters arising from the raids of the last cold weather, and to make their submission. They also say that they will restore all prisoners in their hands, give back the skulls of the killed, the guns they have (30 in numbers), and all the miscellaneous loot they are able to molest munipore in future'.

Another letter says,

', regarding the submission of two Looshais Chiefs, Poiboi and Vanolail, to the Rajahs Government. At the same time I beg to lay before you the substance of the statements of Amoo Singh, a Munniporie, who has returned from a trading expedition to Looshai haut. After thirteen days journey up the river, his party reached the bazaar ghat, where they met three Looshais, where they met three Lushais belonging to Impano's village. The news of the arrival was spread amongst the villages and the Muntries of Impan, Pibuk, Kankam, Deonti, sookpilor, Deonti, Rutonpui and Poiboi came down to trade. The Muntri of the Poiboi village was then questioned about the attack on the Munnipor Nagas. He admitted that his Looshais had made this

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67 From Dr Brown, Political Agent at Munipore, to WS Seton Karr, Esq. Secretary to Government of India, Foreign Department, with the Governor General, - No 77, dated the 17th July 1869, p. 20. SAWB.
raid, in ignorance of the fact that the Nagas were Munnipore subjects. He also stated that he had three captives Naga women at home. Poibois people were prepared for a raid against Munnipore in the cold weather, to avenge the death of 15 Looshais and the capture of 30 muskets by the Munnipore Rajahs Kookies.  

The 1871-72 Expedition was mainly a form of punishment to those Chiefs involved in the lootings, plundering and raidings of the Cachar and Chittagong hills. The responsible Chiefs were made to pay heavy fines, and captives returned. In return the British also recruited a number of Mizo young men either serve under their service or to work in the tea gardens. For the British, it could be considered as a successful expedition because, Mary Winchester, the main reason why this expedition was conducted was taken back safely. They signed a treaty with the descendants of Rolura and Lianlula and it also ratify that British citizens could enter the hill freely.

The expedition also resulted in the opening of three Bazaars for commercial purpose – the Tipamukh on the Tuiruang river bordering Manipur, Sonai Bazar on the Tuirial river and the Changsil Bazar on the Tlawng river were established. Through this trade marts, there were constant ‘friendly relations’ and intercourse with the plains. In the south hills trading centre was also established in 1871 at Tlabung. By 1872 there were eleven shops in Tlabung.

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68 From OGR Mc William Esq. Officiating DC OF Cachar, to the Commissioner of the Dacca Division – No 537, dated Cachar, the 28th July 1869. p.5. SAWB.

69 B.Lalthangliana, op.cit., p.167.
Another important result of the expedition of 1870-71 was the construction of roads - From Silchar to Senvawn, Parvachawm and Daido village. Another road from Kolasib to Serkhan village. And in order to show their victory. A British flag was hoisted on a tall bare tree on 17th February 1872 at Lungverh in Vanhnuailiana’s village (Chawnchhim, Champhai). The General speech mentioned that they have reached their destination by reaching a place where Vanhnuailiana ruled. Lastly, it resulted in the inclusion of more areas within the British Jurisdiction.

During the preceding seventeen years of the 1871-72, there were no less than nineteen inroads into the British territory made by the Mizos, some of which had already been highlighted. The British returned to the policy of exercising political influence without direct control on tribes lying on their border areas. As a consequence of this on 27th January, 1880 in the South hills, an annual darbar or conference of chiefs was held in Tlabung where almost all the Chiefs attended the meeting.

3.2.2 The Chin – Lushai Expedition of 1889:

After the second expedition of 1871-72, the British reckoned the Mizos would learned to behave themselves. For fifteen years, there was no incident of major importance in the British territories caused by the Mizos. During this period, the east west war broke out retarding inroads into the plains. Besides, a rebellion against the Sailos was started in 1885 in the village of Lalkhama, son of Vuttaia. This was the first ever rebellion against the Sailo Chiefs. During this

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70 Ibid., p.162.

71 Simla Records, Foreign Department External/ A. March 1880. Nos 459/463, P. 15.NAI.
period, some Sailo Chiefs were dethroned by the violent mob. But due to the ability of some of the Chiefs to retain their chiefships, the violent mob soon subsided and all the chiefships of the dethroned chiefs were also restored\textsuperscript{72}.

In December 1888, some Lushai Chiefs attacked a village near Demagiri and took away a large number of people as captives. To retaliate, a punitive expedition was again sent into the Lushai Hills under the command of Colonel F.V.W Tregear with Captain J. Shakespear as the intelligence officer\textsuperscript{73}. On reaching the Lushai Hills, Tregear held a Durbar in which some Chiefs gave undertaking of loyalty.

However, from 1888 -1889 raids were again committed at the border areas. Three such raids were made by Mizo different points. The most serious according to British Raj was the killing of Lieutenant J.K Stewart on the 23\textsuperscript{rd} February 1888, only 18 miles from Rangamati (Bangladesh)\textsuperscript{74}. In the same year, Lungliana and Nikhama joined themselves to enter the Chittagong Hill Tracts and invaded a Thangluah settlement there within the British territory killing many people and carrying away captives. Lianphunga also invaded the Riangs settlement killing and capturing many and looting treasures in the same year. The British finally decided that active measures should be immediately taken. For this, a single column was despatched in January 1889, with Demagiri as its base. The operation were under the command of Colonel F.V.W Tregear of the 9\textsuperscript{th} Bengal Infantry with Mr Lyall, the Commissioner, as the Civil Political Officer and Messers C.A.S Bedford and C.S Murray as Assitant

\textsuperscript{72} C.Nunthara, op.cit., p. 54.

\textsuperscript{73} Report on the Lushai expedition of 1889 -90, Intelligence Branch, Quarter Master General's Department, Simla, 1893. P. 12. MSA.

Political Officers. Captain Shakespeare was employed as Intelligent Officer. The operation was succeeded in exacting punishment to Hausata, who was already dead, and all other responsible Chiefs in the raids.

The British raj no longer questioned the needs to pacify the whole hills. The 1889 expedition, however, did not reduced the Shendoos or Shendus to final submission. They therefore sent an expedition on a large scale where military forces of Bengal, Burma (Myanmar) and Assam joined in the operations. This mass scale invasion was called the Chin–Lushai expedition, 1888–1889\(^75\). Arrangement for the future Political and Military control of the Chin–Lushai country's, Political Boundaries between Bengal, Assam and Burma. This expedition was despatched to punish the tribes that raided and committed depredations in the British territory, Secondly, to subjugate the tribes, thirdly, to explore the country lying between Chittagong and Burma, and lastly, to establish post in the regions visited so as to ensure complete pacification and recognition of British power\(^76\). The expedition involved the Government of Bengal, Assam and Burma (Myanmar), and marked the final colonization of Mizoram. The Southern column was again commanded by Colonel Tregear and the Forces consisted of about 3400 men. Captain J. Shakespeare was again an Intelligent officer. The column was under the command of Colonel Skinner and consisted of about 1100 fighting men\(^77\). The invasion was completed in March 1892. It resulted in the occupation of Mizoram and the Chin Hills. Further as a consequence of the events some of the extreme region too was added to the British territory. N.E Parry says ‘It was as a result to the expedition of 1888-1889 that some of the Lakher villages were

\(^75\) Robert Reid, op.cit., p.14, See details; Foreign External A.Progs, August 1890, Nos 221- Government of India.

\(^76\) Animesh Ray, op.cit., pp. 9,10.

\(^77\) C. Nunthara, op.cit., p. 55.
first brought under the British rule’. While the expeditionary forces were in progress, the Government felt that mere occupation of certain parts of the hills by a police force would not keep the areas under control and suggested the posting of an officer who would be capable of habituating the Lushais to the control of the British Government.

The Government appointed Captain H.R Browne as the political officer in the North Lushai Hills. The political officer was asked to establish political influence and control over the Lushais and to induce them to submit to the British rule. He was also asked to attempt administration of law and order, excepting punishing raids to the British friends and to leave the inhabitants to settle their own affairs among themselves.\(^{78}\)

The British also felt the need to construct a communicable road between Chittagong and Burma, between Cachar plains and Mizoram. This was resented by Ropuiliani, the Chieftainess of Denlung village as she feared that people from outside would easily enter Mizoram, which could lead to the harassment and extinction of her tribesmen. Thus, she opposed the British and refused to toe their line. On the other hand, the British felt that Mizoram was situated on a strategic area. And they also knew that there were many tribes living between India and Burma. The British feared that this tribes could become a problem for their expansionist policy and Mizoram being an independent country it was feared that the hills could become a refuge for any aggressive tribe lying between India and Burma, which in the near future could inevitably could become a thorn for British administration. It was therefore, felt necessary to annex the whole hills and to gradually establish control over the other tribes and

sub-tribes lying within and outside the hills. Expansion into Mizoram came to be regarded as necessary for controlling the tribal population already within British India – which included some Mizos living in the neighbouring districts. Therefore, on January 12, 1890, D.R Lyall proposed that the entire Lushai Hills should be taken over and placed under the Bengal government. It was thus decided that the South Lushai Hills should form a district under the Bengal province and the North Lushai Hills became a district in 1891 and was placed under the Superintendent. It was to be noted here that the British Government could only consolidate its administration in the Lushai Hills after sending a punitive expeditionary forces. Evidently these Lushais were a suspicious, accustomed to treacherous dealing.

In April 1891, Capt J. Shakespeare held charge of the South Lushai Hills. His task was to try and consolidate British rule in the hitherto unadministered areas of constant raids and warfare. The last expedition was completed in 1992. In 1896, Shakespeare observed that there was no likelihood of any resistance to the British rule in the near future and hence it was necessary to give up the strong coercive measures taken so far in favour of the gentle rule. Therefore, we can conclude that the coming of the British was occasioned by the raids conducted by the Mizos and the expansion of tea gardens by the British. Initially, it appeared to be a petty war between two parties, but in the end turned out into a full fledge war which resulted in colonization of Mizoram by the British.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the discovery of tea in India in 1788 and the beginning of its plantation in Assam in 1841 and the gradual

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79 Assam Secretariat, Political and Judicial, A. Foreign Progs, August 1890, No 41.77. p. 9. ASR.

80 Shakespear Report on Lushai Hills Administration, 1895-1896. Pol Branch, CB-14, p. 33. MSA.
expansion of the tea gardens at the foot hills of Mizoram inevitably alarmed the tribes. Their main arguments was that, it was an encroachment to their hunting ground and violation of their rights over territory which was traditionally their own. Moreover, in the early 1870’s when the British started to open bazaars in the hills with several guards in charge, Mizos especially the eastern chief resented the posting of guards and it was feared that it would lead to the annexation of their country. This was the reason why some of the newly established bazaars were plundered or burned by the Mizos.

On the British side, since tea had become the main source of income and the increasing demand in tea supply. More land for tea cultivation was required and it was the British policy to protect the tea gardens at the foothills of Mizoram. The continuous raid and plundering conducted by the Mizos in their tea garden caused a huge amount of damages and loss financially. In order to recover the loss, extension and protection of tea garden was very important. Further, huge amount of money was spent for the success of their punitive expeditions. Those expeditions were very expensive as it required large amount for hiring labourers and recruiting more men to served and to strengthen their forces. Large amount of money were used to buy war equipments such as guns and gun powder, animals such as mules, horses and elephants which were largely used for transportation during expeditions against the Mizos and large amount of food supplies had to be expended on both animals and men.

It was clear from the very beginning of the introduction of the tea industry in Assam that the main British objective was to protect their tea gardens and the planters from tribes. In fact, it was due to the economic interest that the British started to undertake punitive measures against tribes. On the other hand, it was felt that, inflicting a retribution sufficient to produce a lasting effect was difficult, for Mizos possessed little or no property and there was
nothing the British could gain from a 'permanent' conquest. Moreover, it was feared that any major expedition would provoke the tribe which would surely bring more of the Mizos on their border areas thus damaging the tea gardens even more. Apart from this, any effective operations was made difficult due to the wild nature of the country and the unfavourable climate. William Grey, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal between 1867-70 referring to the policy towards the tribe by the Assam Government stated that, they were, moreover, averse on principle to moving bodies of troops and armed police with a view to punish such frontier outrages by reprisals, or to admit that it was imperative to chastise the offenders by following them into their own fastness and hills. Their policy with regard to the wild tribes was to place them under a carefully selected and well qualified officer in charge of any difficult tract of country which ordinary authorities were unable to superintend, who should have the entire control of our relations with the tribes.

From the military point of view, the Lushai Hills is simply a mountainous area inhabited by more or less savage tribes with propensity for raiding and committing depredations on the neighbouring plains, if not kept under control by an armed force sufficiently strong not only to meet out punishment when required but also to establish and maintain free communication throughout the district. Moreover it was feared that the probability that any eruption of the Mizos and the killing of their white brothers might cast a bloom on the further operations of the tea gardens and that could be very injurious on the further administration of their government.

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The Mizos, because of their predatory nature and the fact that they had never been subdued as a group to any outgroup powers, the occasional punitary measures taken by the British in the form of armed expeditions into the hills since 1844 did not stop the Mizos from plundering and looting the British territories. This ultimately brought to the final establishment of the British administration in the hills in 1891, though initially without formal official notification of the Government of India. An interesting aspect we find here is that the first part of the British in the Hills initiated the rise of many women Chiefs who bravely fought against the British government. At this particular period, many women Chief came to the forefront in resisting the entry of external power to the Hills. Politically, this period could be regarded as the period of ups and downs as far as women were concerned. They opposed the British with some success but once the British occupied the hills, their activities were restricted.